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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
ARMED FORCES DAY MESSAGE
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED FORCES

"To all the men and women in America's uniform over the world, I want to express the nation's deepest appreciation on this Armed Forces Day. Our nation lives in peace and security thanks to the service, courage and sacrifice of you and your families.

"The theme for this year's observance -- 'Peace Through Readiness' -- has guided the defense of America's freedom from the day it was secured. As President George Washington said in his first annual address to Congress, 'To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.'

"These words strongly resonate today. We've consigned the Cold War to history, but we face a diverse set of national security challenges. These challenges demand a strong, flexible military force that's ready to deter or defeat aggression at a moment's notice.

"We have that force today. You are proud, professional members of the best-trained, best-equipped, best prepared fighting force in the world. I join in President Clinton's commitment to maintain our powerful edge as we make the transition to a military that's sized and structured for the new era.

"You've dedicated your lives to protect and defend our country. We're dedicated to ensuring your readiness and quality of life. You can take great pride in your service to the nation; we take great pride in you. You are the vanguard of 'Peace Through Readiness'."

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